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MORE AND BETTER COAL FROM SOVIET MINES

P. Naumenko

Coal is vital to the continued growth of the Soviet economy. Since coal is the principal fuel of the country, the Five-Year Plan provides for steadily increasing coal output, so that in 1950 production will have reached a level of 250 million tons, or a level 51 percent higher than in 1940.

Steady progress in coal production can be reported for the 3 expired years of the current Five-Year Plan. Production in 1946 exceeded that of the previous year by 10 percent; similarly, 1947 production was 12 percent higher than 1946; and 1948 production was 14 percent over 1947.

Results in 1948 were so good that the All-Union plan had been fulfilled by 25 December, and considerable surplus production was achieved for the year. Many enterprises, such as the following, fulfilled their individual plans ahead of schedule and provided additional production. "Moskvougol" Combine fulfilled its plan on 6 December and provided a surplus of 880,000 tons; "Tulaugol" Combine fulfilled its plan on 17 December and provided a surplus of 457,000 tons; and "Molotovugol" Combine fulfilled its plan on 25 December and provided a surplus of 170,000 tons. In 1948, the Moscow coal basin produced 240 percent and the Donbass 80 percent of their prewar production levels.

This steady increase of production resulted from concentrated effort by the whole coal-mining industry in such endeavors as expanding open-cut mining operations and initiating them in the Kuzbass and in Central Asia, improving mining methods in the existing mines and opening new mines, building or restoring coal-dressing plants, enlarging the mining-machinery building base, organizing new enterprises for production of building materials and reinforced concrete supports, and engaging in socialist competitions.

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1. Mechanization

Mechanization of coal-mining operations has progressed considerably since the end of World War II. Compared with prewar times, mechanization has increased as follows: in cutting operations, from 92.5 to 99 percent; in hauling operations, from 59.6 to 84 percent; in loading (into railroad cars) operations, from 91 to 96 percent.

With regard to mechanization in individual coal basins, the following facts stand out: mechanization of cutting operations has been completed in the Kizel, Chelyabinsk, and Karaganda basins, almost completed in the Kuznetsk basin, and increased by 6 percent in the Donets basin. Mechanization of hauling operations has been completed in the Moscow basin, almost completed in the Chelyabinsk basin, and increased by almost 200 percent in the Donets basin. Mechanization of loading (into railroad cars) operations has been completed in the Karaganda basin and almost completed in the Moscow and Kizel basins.

2. New Equipment

New cutting and transportation equipment is already being widely utilized. New machines in use include cutting machines, which were introduced in 1948 and have already increased production of anthracite and very hard coal; scraper conveyers, which replaced the inefficient shaking conveyers; and electric engines for coal hauling.

Some of the labor-consuming operations, however, such as loading the coal in the stopes, building of supports, and laying of foundations have not yet been mechanized.

The Ministry of Electrical Industry and other machine-building ministries have devised completely new machinery for certain labor-consuming operations. This machinery includes coal combines, cutting and loading machines, coal planes, crosscut drills, sinking combines, coal- and rock-loading equipment, and light (2-ton) electric switching engines. This kind of equipment will make complete mechanization of all mining operations possible.

Even now coal- and rock-loading machines and crosscut drills, which are used in preliminary work, increase the speed of cutting as much as 400-500 percent, as tests have demonstrated. Typical examples of rapid cutting are those of mine No 5 of the Krasnoluchugol' Trust in the Donbass with 155 meters per month and of Mine No 8-10 of the Bokovnatratsit Trust, also in the Donbass, with 165 meters per month.

The use of metallic supports in the mines was equally successful and will result in economies in timber. Portable supporting installations, which serve to increase the efficiency of combines, are successfully being tested in the Moscow basin. Mechanized portable supports (Zhuravlev shields) are being tested in mines of the Karaganda and Moscow basins. Metallic and reinforced concrete supports are also widely used in preliminary work. In well-organized mines, centralized dispatching and signaling, and the block system are applied in underground transport, as well as centralized operation of mining equipment.

In 1947, the Ministry of Heavy Industry started assembly-line production of powerful excavators for mine opening; the Ministry of Coal Industry developed the production of excavator draglines, track layers, belt swing chutes (lentocnyye otvalobrazovateli), belt conveyers, and rotary drills. Other Ministries developed assembly-line production of multibucket excavators, bulldozers, tractor-operated scrapers, dump cars, etc.

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Considerable success has been achieved in mechanizing earth-moving work, stone crushing, concrete mixing, etc.

For removing rock, one of the most difficult operations in opening a new shaft, a special pneumatic loader was developed, which cuts the time required for opening a new shaft in half. For reconstruction work in war-damaged mines, a special clearing apparatus was developed. A number of special pumps for pumping water from such mines were also developed.

3. Labor Productivity

As a result of organizational and technical improvements, labor productivity has risen every year. The following examples show how labor productivity has increased in a year's time, from 1947-1948 (in percent):

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Rostovugol' Combine | 10.6 |
| Donbassantratsit Combine | 10.0 |
| Artemugol' Combine | 14.0 |
| Voroshilovgradugol' Combine | 11.8 |
| Krasnoyarskugol' Combine | 10.5 |

4. Deficiencies in Coal Mine Operation

Although considerable success has been achieved by the coal-mining industry, many deficiencies are still being observed, and a number of mines and trusts did not fulfill the State plans for coal mining.

The main causes for failing to fulfill their plans were: negligence, lagging in preliminary work, breakdown of machinery, defective operation of the underground transportation system, and serious deficiencies in the organization of work in the mines.

Mechanized equipment is still not being used as extensively as it should be. In this respect, the East 1 Regions are particularly backward; equipment, such as Makarov combines and new machinery for loading coal and rock, is not yet in general use.

Although very often available equipment is highly efficient, it is frequently run at very low speed. Lack of organization is the main cause of this situation. Coal mine administrators do not sufficiently emphasize and enforce advanced working methods devised by workers who regularly surpass their norms. The Ministry of Coal Industry has given inadequate attention to the problem of improving the use of equipment and applying advanced and progressive methods as established by the plan.

A number of mines still work three shifts per day. As a result, machine repair and maintenance are not performed adequately. Some administrators pretend that maintenance work is performed during the third shift. If so, workers remain idle for a considerable length of time or are used for other than their own special activity with consequent lowering of their productivity. A two-shift system offers the advantage of creating established personnel in the mines and reducing unnecessary labor adjustments. Productivity would then also increase.

In open-cut mines it happens that unsatisfactory stripping work is done for normal exploitation of the mines. In the Urals, mining regulations are very often violated. Gradients, for instance, are greater than permitted; as a result, work-interrupting slides occur. Excavating equipment is not adequately used in the Urals. Poor organization and an inadequate transport system are the principal causes of poor results in strip operations.

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In 1948, a number of mines in the process of building or restoration did not start operations, as provided by the plan. This failure was caused by insufficient mechanization in rock-loading operations, in cutting of vertical and inclined shafts, and in hauling. Other reasons were the dispersion of manpower and material, the lack of organization, the shortage of local building materials, and the inadequate use of construction equipment.

Delay in building and restoring coal dressing and briquet plants must also be pointed out as a deficiency in the coal industry.

5. Remedies for Deficiencies in Mining Operations

The coal industry is now in a position to eliminate all the causes of unsatisfactory work. The machine-building industry is now twice as large as in 1940 and can provide all the necessary equipment.

The government decision to consolidate the Coal Ministries for Western and Eastern Regions and the Ministry for Fuel Building Enterprises into a single Coal Industry Ministry makes for better organization of work and for improvement in distribution of equipment and manpower.

In 1949, attention must be concentrated on the following tasks to provide more and better coal from Soviet mines: further improvement in mechanization; training of qualified personnel; improvement of working methods; application of average progressive norms; rational organization of mine building and restoration; complete restoration of the Donets mines and increasing their production above the prewar level; improvement of the quality of coal supplied; providing coal with lower ash and sulfur content for metallurgical purposes; introduction of larger size coal for railroads; increase in production of "K"-type coal for ferrous metallurgy (the Kuznetsk mines must make up for the shortage of this type which occurred in 1948).

Further effort must be made to increase savings and to increase the rate of turnover of working capital. Attention must be given to: speeding up the production cycle; speeding up production in coal-machinery building factories; reduction of surplus coal, metal, timber, etc., stored in warehouses of Glavsnab (Main Administration of Supply), Glavuglesbyt (Main Administration of Coal Sales), coal combines, trusts, and even mines; and establishment of normal reserves in accordance with the plan.

Successful accomplishment of these tasks will help the country to increase its economic power and to approach the goal set by Stalin in his speech of 9 February 1946. This set goal is to raise the annual production of coal to 500 million tons.

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